

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 ORM-01 SR-02

PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 EA-06 ABF-01

SSO-00 INRE-00 SAM-01 SAB-01 CU-02 EB-03 /057 W

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O R 151135Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4075

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 1759

LIMDIS

DAMASCUS FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, JO, XF

SUBJ: JORDAN PM DEMARCHE ON UNRWA DEFICIT

REF: AMMAN 1735

1. SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER MARCH 15 CONVOKED AMBASSADORS OF COUNTRIES ON UNRWA ADVISORY COUNCIL. NOTED DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR JORDAN AND UNRWA OF CUTS IN EDUCATIONAL AND RATION SERVICES COVERED IN LETTER FROM COMMISSIONER GENERAL AND PROPOSED TO BEGIN ON APRIL 1. ASKED GOVERNMENTS TO SEEK A POSTPONEMENT OF THESE CUTS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND TO INCREASE THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR UNRWA. PROMISED THAT JORDAN WOULD TAKE LEAD IN ARAB COUNCIL MEETING END OF
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MARCH TO INCREASE ARAB CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA

OR TO OTHER BODIES OF UN WHICH COULD PASS FUNDS
TO UNRWA. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER CONVOKED AMBASSADOR AND TURKISH,
UK, FRENCH AND JAPANESE COLLEAGUES, ON QUESTION OF
UNRWA DEFICIT. HE REPORTED FACT THAT UNRWA COMMISSIONER
GENERAL HAD SENT A CONFIDENTIAL LETTER TO GOJ NOTING THAT
DEFICIT WOULD REQUIRE AS FROM APRIL 1 SEVERE CUTBACKS
IN EDUCATIONAL AND RATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY UNRWA
TO REFUGEES. INITIAL CUTBACKS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY
EMPLOYEE LAYOFFS.

3. JORDAN HAD THEN REQUESTED PRESENCE OF COMMISSION
GENERAL (REFTEL) TO EXPLAIN AND DISCUSS SITUATION.
JORDAN HAD URGED AN IMMEDIATE DELAY IN IMPLEMENTATION
OF PROPOSED CUTS. RENNIE (UNRWA COMMISSIONER GENERAL)
REPLIED THAT CUTBACKS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO COMPLETE
PRESENT YEAR. RIFAI SAID JORDAN'S POSITION WAS THAT
CUTBACKS NOW WOULD DESTROY UNRWA IN ARAB WORLD IN
ADDITION TO CAUSING SEVEREST KIND OF DISLOCATIONS IN
JORDAN AND WOULD HAVE MAJOR DELETERIOUS EFFECT NOT
ONLY ON INTERNAL SECURITY IN JORDAN BUT ALSO WOULD
AFFECT ADVERSELY PRESENT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE NEXT STEPS
IN NEGOTIATED PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST. RENNIE HAD
THEN AGREED TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION OF STEPS
UNTIL FIRST OF MAY.

4. RIFAI THEN PRESENTED JORDANIAN REACTION, NOTING
THAT CUTBACK IN SCHOOL SUPPORT BY UNRWA WOULD TERMINATE
EDUCATION FOR TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND STUDENTS, CLOSE
THIRTY-TWO SCHOOLS, AND PUT OUT OF WORK 823
TEACHERS. IMPACT OF RATION CUTS WOULD BE EVEN MORE
SEVERE. OF 301,000 RATION RECIPIENTS, AFTER CUTBACKS,
ONLY 80,000 WOULD BE LEFT ON ROLLS. PUTTING IN EFFECT
220,000 REFUGEES ON THE BACK OF THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT
FOR RATION SUPPORT WOULD BE AN OVERWHELMING PROBLEM.
RIFAI ALSO NOTED THAT SUCH CUTS NOW IN LEBANON WOULD HAVE
A STARTLING IMPACT AND IT WOULD BE ONLY LESS DIFFICULT
FOR SYRIA.

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5. IN LIGHT OF FACT THAT UNRWA ADVISORY COUNCIL WILL
BE MEETING IN BEIRUT ON MONDAY, MARCH 17, AND AMBASSADORS
IN JORDAN OF ALL COUNTRIES REPRESENTED THERE (WITH
EXCEPTION OF BELGIAN WHO IS VISITING KING IN AQABA),
HE ASKED FOR: (A) SUPPORT FOR POSTPONEMENT BY UNRWA
OF ANY CUTS UNTIL MAY FIRST; (B) ANY ADDITIONAL CONTRIBU-
TIONS WHICH STATES REPRESENTED AT THIS MORNING'S MEETING
COULD MAKE TO MEET CURRENT \$30 MILLION DEFICIT.

6. RIFAI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE KNEW THAT STATES PRESENT HAD MADE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND WERE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT THE OTHER ARABS COULD DO. RIFAI PERSONALLY DEPLORED FACT THAT CONVOLUTED INTER-ARAB IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS HAD RESULTED IN ONLY TOKEN CONTRIBUTIONS BY SUCH STATES AS SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT--MEASURED IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. THEREFORE, JORDAN WOULD MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT IN NEXT ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING SET FOR MARCH 23 TO INCREASE ARAB CONTRIBUTIONS. RIFAI WOULD BE CHAIRING MEETING AND WOULD CONSULT WITH OTHER INTERESTED STATES--LEBANON AND SYRIA BEFOREHAND. IN ADDITION, RIFAI WOULD TRY OUT POSSIBILITY OF HAVING THEM MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNESCO FOR UNRWA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, DIRECTLY TO UN, OR TO COUNTRIES CONCERNED. FOR EXAMPLE, JORDAN COULD MEET \$3.9 MILLION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DEFICIT BY ACCEPTING A CONTRIBUTION FOR ANOTHER ARAB STATE TO MEET SUCH A REQUIREMENT. HE HOPED THAT THIS WOULD HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON OTHER ARABS AND FURTHER EASE THE WAY FOR THE EUROPEANS, U.S. AND JAPAN TO INCREASE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS. HE STATED AGAIN HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE VERY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON JORDAN. IN ADDITION, RIFAI SAID THAT IF QUADRIPARTITE MEETING WERE HELD AT END OF MARCH HE WOULD TAKE LEAD WITH EGYPT, SYRIA AND PLO TO SEEK THEIR ASSISTANCE IN INCREASING ARAB CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA OR FOR UNRWA PURPOSES. RIFAI ALSO NOTED THAT PLO SOUGHT AT CAIRO JANUARY 4 QUADRIPARTITE MEETING TO BECOME SOLE SPOKESMAN OF PALESTINIANS WITH UNRWA. RIFAI VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED THIS STEP, IN PART BECAUSE PLO INDICATED ITS SOLE PURPOSE IN DOING SO WAS TO USE SUCH AS A PLATFORM FOR CHASTIZING WESTERN IMPERIALISTS WHO HAD CREATED

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PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM IN FIRST PLACE. RIFAI OBVIOUSLY NOT VERY SANGUINE ABOUT DEGREE TO WHICH PLO WOULD REALLY BE WILLING TO HELP IN THIS EFFORT.

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 ORM-01 SR-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4076

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECSTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 1759

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DAMASCUS FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

7. MY UK COLLEAGUE ASKED HOW MUCH MONEY JORDAN PROVIDED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS FOR THE CARE OF REFUGEES UNDER ITS CHARGE (MAINLY 1967 WEST BANK REFUGEES NOT CARED FOR BY UNRWA). RIFAI SAID THAT LAST YEAR MORE OR LESS \$18 MILLION HAD BEEN PROVIDED, ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST, DEPENDING UPON WORLD FOOD PRICES, IT HAD BEEN AS LARGE AS JD 10 MILLION (\$31.5). SUCH WAS THE MAXIMUM JORDAN COULD DO AND IT WAS NOT INCONSEQUENTIAL IN LIGHT OF ITS OWN FINANCIAL SITUATION.

8. I NOTED THAT U.S. HAD ALREADY MOVED TO HELP REDUCE THE DEFICIT BY A GIFT OF \$10 MILLION OVER AND ABOVE OUR REGULAR CONTRIBUTION. OUR REGULAR CONTRIBUTION HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT INCREASED OVER LAST YEAR AND THAT THERE WAS IN ADDITION A FURTHER \$6 MILLION
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INCORPORATED IN PENDING FOREIGN AID
LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD PROVIDE ANOTHER INCREMENT
TO MEET DEFICIT IF PASSED.

9. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: SUBJECT PROBABLY WILL NOT
ARISE DURING SECRETARY'S VISIT TONIGHT AND TOMORROW ALTHOUGH IT

WAS BRIEFLY DISCUSSED AT AQABA. JORDANIANS SEEM
GENUINELY SHAKEN BY CONSEQUENCES PROPOSED UNRWA
ACTION AND WE HERE ARE CONVINCED THAT IT WOULD MEAN A
SEVERE TRIAL FOR JORDAN IF ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT. SINCE
RENNIE TOLD US HE HAD SOME FLEXIBILITY IN IMPLEMENTING
PROPOSED CUTS WE ASSUME U.S. PARTICIPANTS AT BEIRUT
WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE IN SUPPORTING JORDAN:
GRATEFUL IF DEPARTMENT WOULD INSTRUCT U.S. PARTICIPANTS AND
SO ADVISE US. FURTHER, SHOULD RIFAI TAKE LEAD WITH OTHER ARABS
IN SEEKING ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS AS PROMISED, WE HOPE THAT
SUBSEQUENTLY U.S. WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THIS EFFORT ON IMAGINATIVE
BASIS OF PROVIDING FUNDS TO BODIES OTHER THAN UNRWA
BUT FOR PURPOSES OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEE RELIEF.
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